

## Left warns of tougher protests over port lease

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, City

Leftist leaders threatened to launch tougher movements if the government does not cancel its anti-sovereignty moves like leasing out the Chattogram port's New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) to a foreign operator and providing aid passage to Myanmar's Rakhine state.

The announcement was made yesterday at the concluding rally of the two-day Dhaka to Chattogram road march organised under the banner of "Anti-Imperialist Patriotic People", a coalition of left-leaning parties and organisations to protest foreign control of ports as well as other demands.

Handing over a profitable and equipped port terminal to a foreign entity and providing an aid corridor to a conflict-prone neighbouring state are against the spirit of last year's mass uprising, said Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh.

Terming such decisions as 'anti-state moves', Prince said such crucial decisions are beyond the jurisdiction of an interim government.

"We won't allow any move of leasing out NCT to a foreign operator. If the government doesn't refrain from these anti-state activities, we will start a tougher movement after the celebration of the anniversary of mass uprising."

He criticised Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's appeal to citizens to resist those who would protest the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Islami Andolan Bangladesh leaders and activists gather at the Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka yesterday afternoon for a rally, calling for reforms, justice for the July killings, and a proportional representation system in parliament.

PHOTO: STAR

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Those backing proportional representation don't want polls

**Says Salahuddin**

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday alleged that those advocating for a proportional representation system and prioritising local government polls may have intentions to delay or obstruct the upcoming national election.



"Those who are talking about a proportional representation system have a motive. Those who want local government elections before the national election also have a motive. Either they want the election to be delayed, or they want no election at all in Bangladesh. This could be their intention."

Salahuddin made the remarks while speaking to reporters after a memorial publication event on late president Ziaur Rahman and an archive unveiling programme organised by the Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network at the International Mother Language Institute Auditorium.

The BNP leader said people are united in their demand for the national election to be held in early

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## BANGLADSH MEDICAL UNIVERSITY BUDGET No money for its new specialised hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Medical University (BMU) yesterday approved a Tk 976 crore budget for the next fiscal year but made no allocation for its Super Specialised Hospital, raising fresh doubts over the prospect of making the facility fully operational nearly three years after its inauguration.

No specific funds were allocated for the 750-bed premier healthcare facility by the health ministry, university authorities said at a press conference yesterday.

The hospital, established under a Tk 1,868 crore project, was inaugurated in September 2022. However, no dedicated workforce has been appointed so far, and limited services are being provided using BMU's existing staff and budget.

Aimed at offering world-class healthcare and reducing the need for Bangladeshis to seek treatment abroad, the hospital has five specialised centres: the Cardio and Cerebrovascular Centre, the Hepatobiliary and Liver Transplant Centre, the Mother and Child Healthcare Centre, the Kidney Disease and Urology Centre, and the Accident and Emergency Centre.

BMU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Shahinul Alam said the hospital has generated high public expectations. "Although the hospital has been offering several services, it has yet to reach the expected level," he told reporters after the university syndicate approved the budget.

**Of Tk 976cr budget, health ministry to give Tk 568.22cr; UGC to provide Tk 144.86cr, university to contribute Tk 135cr and cover Tk 127.87cr deficit.**

He said the university had sought Tk 60 crore from the health ministry, primarily for workforce recruitment, but the funds were not granted. "Currently, the hospital is being run using BMU's own budget."

Prof Shahinul added, "Once the workforce issue, which is pending with the ministry, is resolved and people are recruited, full-fledged operations could begin within a week."

**ONLY FOUR PERCENT FOR RESEARCH**  
Of the Tk 976 crore revenue and development budget, only Tk 37.10 crore (around four percent) was allocated for research at the country's top medical university.

The overall budget is roughly Tk 175 crore (18 percent) higher than the revised budget of the outgoing fiscal year. However, it is Tk 78 crore less than the original allocation of Tk 1,054 crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Of the total Tk 976 crore, the health ministry will provide Tk 568.22 crore, the University Grants Commission Tk 144.86 crore, and the university itself will contribute Tk 135 crore. The remaining Tk 127.87 crore deficit will likely also be covered by the university.

In the outgoing budget, Tk 35.60 crore had been allocated for research, but the revised figure stood at Tk 19.9 crore, according to budget documents.

BMU Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Development) Prof Md Mujibur Rahman

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Protests for removal of KMP chief continue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Students Against Discrimination (SAD) continued their demonstrations in Khulna city for the third consecutive day yesterday, demanding the removal of KMP Commissioner Zulfikar Ali Haider.

They blocked the Khan Jahan Ali Road in front of the Khulna Metropolitan Police.

Students from different colleges and universities joined the protests that began around 3:30pm. Members of the Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swedchhaseb Dal also took part in the demonstrations.

On Tuesday, locals detained Sub-Inspector Sukanta Das of Khan Jahan Ali Police Station and handed him over to the police after beating him up. They alleged Sukanta assaulted students and people during the July uprising last year.

The students began demonstrating after police released Sukanta,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

## Over 100 Babui chicks dead as tree in Jhalakathi felled



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Locals of Jhalakathi yesterday expressed outrage after over 100 weaver bird (Babui pakkhi) chicks were killed and several eggs damaged when a palm tree, considered a vital nesting site for the species, was cut down in Jhalakathi Sadar upazila.

One Mizanur Rahman allegedly felled the tree, which stood adjacent to a paddy field in Purba Guaton village.

The tree housed over 100 weaver bird nests. While many of the adult birds managed to fly away, the chicks and eggs were destroyed, witnesses said.

UNOFarhana Yeasmin said they learned about the incident and conducted an investigation. "We found the allegations to be true and decided to take action against the accused. She requested the forest department to file a case against Mizanur in this regard."

Md Kabir Hossain Patowary, deputy conservator of forests and divisional forest officer of Barishal's social forestry division, confirmed that legal action would be taken against the accused.

"We will file a case against the accused under the Wildlife [Conservation and Security] Act for killing the chicks, damaging eggs, and destroying the nests," he said.

## 21-yr-old raped in Cumilla, a 6th grader in Mymensingh

STAR REPORT

A 21-year-old woman was raped at knifepoint in Cumilla on Thursday, while two men were sent to jail yesterday for the rape of a child in Mymensingh.

In another incident, a madrasa director was arrested in Noakhali for attempting to rape a child.

In Cumilla, the survivor, a mother of two, had gone to visit her father's house around two weeks ago.

A neighbour, Md Fazl Ali, 36, known for stalking her during her visits, entered the house on Thursday night when other family members were out attending a fair. He raped her at knifepoint and threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident, according to the case statement filed by the survivor the next day.

She added that locals rushed to the scene when she began screaming and they beat up Fazl, but he still managed to escape.

Jahidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Muradnagar Police Station,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



Sheep graze on the "football pitch" set up on a dried-up bank of the Padma next to the Rajshahi city protection dam. Street food stalls have closed as people do not go there anymore. The river is now far away despite it being the rainy season. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

## Bangladesh's digital sphere in freefall Says study supported by EU, Article 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's digital and civic space (DCS) is in a deepening crisis with rising violence, intimidation and gender disinformation targeting journalists, activists and citizens who speak truth to power, found a recent study.

Amid growing intolerance and unchecked impunity, the country's civic environment, both online and offline, is shrinking, silencing critical voices and undermining democratic freedoms, according to the report titled 'Striking Cases Impacting Digital and Civic Space and Gender Disinformation in Bangladesh'.

The report was jointly prepared by VOICE and The Daily Ittefaq under the project Collaborative Actions for Promoting Digital and Civic Space and Combating Gender Disinformation, supported by the European Union, Free Press Unlimited, and Article 19.

Since October last year, VOICE documented at least 80 significant incidents relating to DCS violations and cases of gender disinformation reported in media, with 25 detailed as case studies.

Among these, 24 incidents involved bodily harm and assault, 11 related to gender disinformation, eight involved harassment and intimidation and four were linked to alleged vexatious cases.

The report also documented incidents of killings, media censorship, arbitrary detention, abductions, cases filed under the Cyber Security Act against journalists